

IN THE NATION

Tom Wicker

**Savimbi
And
Marcos**

The Reagan Administration "wants to be seen as fully aware that the election cheating [in the Philippines] was done by the Marcos camp and as understanding of the Aquino concerns, but not be stamped as anti-Marcos." Its "immediate goal is to prevent a further hardening of battle lines. . . ."

So wrote Leslie Gelb, quoting Administration officials, in Wednesday's New York Times. In that same issue were these stories:

• "Reagan Says Support for the Contras Must Go Beyond 'Band-Aids.'" So he will ask for \$70 million in guns and ammunition and \$30 million in "humanitarian" aid to help rebel forces try to overthrow the Marxist but recognized Government of Nicaragua.

• "President Decides to Send Weapons to Angola Rebels." He's using about \$15 million in Central Intelligence Agency funds to provide aid for guerrillas under Jonas Savimbi, who already had the support of South Africa in trying to overthrow the Marxist but recognized Government of Angola.

Of all these decisions, based apparently on the ideological dogma that anything calling itself "anti-Communist" must be "freedom," the most outrageous is the policy designed to mute reaction to the theft of the Philippine election by the corrupt but "anti-Communist" dictator Ferdinand Marcos. But the most illogical is the new intervention in Angola, where nothing is to be gained and much could be lost.

Mr. Savimbi is a raffish character who got his political training from Maoists, who failed to win a leadership post in the Marxist party that now governs Angola, who then organized his own dissident party of no

particular leaning except that it is certainly not "democratic," and who since 1975 has been on the take from the C.I.A., South Africa or both. If he were in power, he might or might not give Angola better government and greater independence, from the United States and South Africa as well as from the Soviet Union; but he would certainly give it more cult of personality and the indelible taint of South African sponsorship.

American conservatives, who see a "freedom fighter" in this freebooter, tend to dismiss his South African support. He's had to take aid where he could get it, they argue; and Representative Jack Kemp suggests that if the United States supports him, he won't have to be on South Africa's payroll — a prospect that \$15 million will hardly cause to come true. This apologia ignores two cardinal points:

First, in serving his own interests, Mr. Savimbi has served South Africa's. Pretoria has frustrated all Western efforts, including those of the United States, to bring independence to Namibia, which South Africa governs illegally; the most recent reason given is that the Cuban troops in Angola, which borders Namibia, would facilitate a Communist takeover after South Africa moved out.

But the Cuban troops remain in Angola primarily to help thwart Mr. Savimbi's insurgency; thus, Mr. Savimbi — who admits he has no chance to win a military victory — allows South Africa to buy the excuse it needs to stay in Namibia, through its support for him. Why should the United States reward him for the frustration of its Namibian policy?

Second, the certain future in South Africa is the emergence, peacefully or otherwise, of a black majority regime. Farsighted U.S. policy would support that inevitability, and attempt to shape it with minimum bloodshed, just as President Carter gave his support to an independent black regime in Zimbabwe at a time when he was strongly urged to support reactionary whites and black puppets.

Renewed United States support for Jonas Savimbi, so far from looking similarly to the future, will be seen by black Africans as more like the myopic Nixon-Kissinger policy of last-ditch support for Portugal when its colonies, Mozambique and Angola, were moving inexorably toward majority black government.

In the subsequent struggle for control of Angola, the Ford Administration abandoned diplomacy and committed \$32 million in C.I.A. funds to the support of "anti-Communist" factions led by Holden Roberto and Mr. Savimbi. The result? Escalation met escalation; Cuban troops arrived (apparently after South Africa's first intervention, although the record is not conclusive) and have been in Angola ever since; the Marxist M.P.L.A. came into power; and Jonas Savimbi began his long trek into Ronald Reagan's embrace. □